

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADANA 0083

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PINS PGOV PHUM TU IZ ADANA

SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY,
MARCH 24, 2003

¶11. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 24, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

¶12. Cumhuriyet/Evrensel/Dunya/Tercuman/Sabah/Hurriyet: Having obtain only over-flight permission from Turkey, the US is getting ready to close down its military bases in southeastern Turkey. Trucks and buses were dispatched to remove military personnel and equipment from Nusaybin's Industrial Zone. Vice Chairman for Nusaybin's Craftsmen and Merchants Association, Zeynel Tuncalan, said the industrial zone had been rented to the US in February for a period of one year at USD 248,000 a month; they did not receive any notification about the evacuation of the facilities. Some 1,800 military vehicles and 500 containers of military equipment that were offloaded at Iskenderun port for the northern front will now be reloaded. No materiel has been dispatched from the port by rail for the past three days. Activity was seen at the air bases. A big number of C-17 cargo planes landed at Batman airport.

¶13. Cumhuriyet: Citizens in the Southeast complained about a lack of measures taken against the possible use of chemical and biological weapons. The inhabitants of Batman said it was mandatory during 1991 Gulf War for pharmacies to have atropine sulfate, an anti-poison drug, but now it was not available at any of the 50 pharmacies in town. The citizens complained that neither the Provincial Health Directorate nor the Provincial Civil Defense Directorate had taken any measures, and that they needed at least 500,000 atropine sulfate units. The Provincial Health Directorate officials said they were called at least by 50 or 70 people a day asking about precautions they should take in case of a chemical or biological attack.

¶14. Milliyet/Radikal/Tercuman/Hurriyet: Sanliurfa Governor Sukru Kocatepe announced that a piece that fell off a plane that belonged to an unidentified country landed one kilometer away from Ozveren village in Sanliurfa province. The debris left a four-meter-wide and one-meter-deep hole in the ground. The governor said Turkish military officials were examining the site. The jandarma found a 1.3 meter long metal piece near Ayakli village of Viransehir. It is reported that the metal piece found was a from a "guided missile," the body of which had exploded and fallen over a 500 meter area.

¶15. Tercuman: Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul announced that there were no negative aspects in Turkish-US relations. FM Gul announced that Turkey had granted permission to an American C-130 aircraft carrying wounded individuals to land at Incirlik AB the previous evening.

¶16. Milliyet: With the legal conclusion of Operation Northern Watch, jets did not fly and tanker planes operating under ONW flew out of Turkey as of Friday. Some 1,200 soldiers assigned to ONW at Incirlik AB are expected to return home. It is reported that the planes continuing to use Incirlik AB were flying in support of the humanitarian relief program in Afghanistan. Preparations are being made near the base's golf course for deploying Patriot missiles.

17. Evrensel: During Newroz festivities on March 21 in Bingol, five people, including an administrator at DEHAP's National Headquarters, were ordered held and subsequently put in Bingol prison. Seven more persons were imprisoned in Sanliurfa, and one in Izmir, in connection with Newroz-related incidents.

18. Evrensel: After policemen failed to capture a group of youth who set a bonfire and shouted slogans during Newroz celebrations in Siirt, the policemen allegedly took revenge by breaking the windows of the surrounding houses with the stones. The windows of ten houses are reported to have been damaged.

19. Evrensel: Ten students from Cukurova University in Adana who had been detained on the grounds of undertaking anti-war actions on March 21 were subsequently released by the State Security Court of Adana.

110. Turkiye: Two persons trying to introduce 40,000 dollars in counterfeit U.S. currency into the market in Batman were arrested by police. During a search of a taxi, fake 100 U.S. dollar bank notes were found in secret compartments of the car.

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